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Claim 1 (currently amended). In the method of processing air prior to separation of such air into gaseous components, the steps that include:

a) first compressing a stream of air and cooling the compressed air, to enable water separation and removal from the stream, to provide a dry stream of air,

b) then further compressing the dry air stream and cooling the compressed dry air stream to enable removal of contained remanent water,

c) then expanding the cooled air stream in an expansion stage which extracts work from the expanding stream,

d) then passing the expanded air stream to a separator operating to remove water from the stream, thereby producing dry air passed to a component gas separation stage or stages[[.]],

e) said b) step including operating a booster compressor to compress dried air at a booster compression stage,

f) controllably passing compressed air to flow from the discharge side of the booster compressor to the inlet of a turbine which provides said expansion stage, thereby by-passing said cooling step and water removal step of sub-paragraph b),

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g) providing a flow control valve in the path of said by-passing air flow,

h) and operating said valve to maintain the temperature of the exhaust air from the turbine at or above about 5°C.

Claim 2 (cancelled).

Claim 3 (currently amended). The method of claim 2 ~~including providing a~~ wherein said booster compressor is driven by the turbine and operating to compress dried air at a booster compression stage defined at sub-paragraph b) in claim 1.

Claims 4-6 (cancelled).

Claim 7 (original). The method of claim 1 including the step of separating dried air into its component gases at said air component separation stage.

Claim 8 (original). The method of claim 2 wherein the turbine has air inlet nozzles, and including the step of adjusting said nozzles to control air flow delivery to said component gas separation stage.

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Claims 9 and 10 (cancelled).